



### **TVA Offers Renewable Energy**

*Official says service will give customers environmentally friendly choices*

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HUNTSVILLE - Electricity flowing through Tennessee Valley homes and businesses will begin turning "green" by the end of the year.

Ten of the Tennessee Valley Authority's electricity distributors - including Huntsville Utilities - next month will begin a pilot program offering customers a chance to pay a little extra for electricity produced by methane gas at landfills.

TVA is trying to give its customers environmentally friendly choices, said spokeswoman Barbara Martocci. "And one of the means of supporting the environment is to explore the use of renewable," or green, energy, she said.

Under TVA's Green Power program, the federal utility has contracted with California-based enXco Inc. to set up wind generators that look like windmills at one or more sites in the TVA region, Ms. Martocci said. BP Solarex, a Maryland-based division of BP Amoco, is under contract with TVA to develop installations of solar panels in areas served by each of the participating distributors, she said. The solar site in Huntsville will be atop SciQuest, an interactive children's science center.

Negotiations are under way with a company to develop landfill sites, Ms. Martocci said. TVA is spending \$7 million to develop the wind, solar and landfill-gas generation systems for the pilot program. Power generated by the sites will total between 3 and 6 megawatts. That's a tiny fraction of the 28,000 megawatts TVA produces for feed homes and businesses in its seven-state region.

Customers of the 10 distributors in the pilot program can begin signing up for the program on April 22, which is Earth Day.

The Tennessee Valley Energy Reform Coalition is hosting a series of meetings to explain the program to the public. Its Huntsville meeting will be at 7 tonight on the grounds of the Burritt Museum. Stephen Smith, executive director of the coalition, said TVA customers will be offered the option of paying \$4 extra a month for each 150 kilowatt hours they want to come from green-power generators. For a small home using 1,500 kilowatt hours a month, a customer would have to pay \$40 extra to have all the electricity designated as green power.

Smith expects most people who participate to designate one or possibly a few more blocks. "For the price of a fast-food meal once a month you can help bring clean technology and clean power into the valley," he said.

"Green electricity" will be mixed in with the power from TVA's fossil-fuel and nuclear plants and hydroelectric dam generators. That means a customer paying extra for green power may not actually get electricity produced from a wind turbine, solar panel or landfill gas generator. "Think of it as a power pool, and there are a number of fountains feeding that pool," Smith said. "What you're making sure of is that your portion is being replaced by clean power."

In a survey two years ago of 1,400 Tennessee Valley residents, 84 percent said green power should be an option for customers, Smith said. About 700,000 power customers will have the option of green power during the pilot period, Smith said, and the goal is to have 1 percent of them sign up for the first year.

As the program expands to the entire TVA region by the end of 2003, Smith hopes the percentage of those signing up will also rise. "We've been very concerned about how TVA generates its power and have advocated other sources that are less polluting," Smith said.

He said the federal utility is especially concerned that its coal-fired plants are polluting the air. For example, he blames the plants for the thick smog covering the Smoky Mountains. While the coalition has been a frequent critic of TVA, Smith said the agency deserves kudos for becoming the first power producer in the Southeast to take the first step toward developing less-polluting methods of producing electricity. "This is that classic you've got to crawl before you walk, before you run," Smith said.

The move into "green" energy production may be a boon to TVA in the long run officials said.

Congress could begin taking serious measures next year to deregulate the power industry, including the federally owned TVA, Smith said. That would make it possible for one company in the Southeast to compete with another company in the Northeast for customers, similar to the way the telephone industry was deregulated. Some states are already deregulating the industry on a local level.

Proposals in Congress include several that mandate up to 7.5 percent of a power company's electricity be generated from renewable energy sources between 2010 and 2020, Smith said.

If those limits aren't written into law, companies may not risk investing "green power" technology, Smith said. That would leave the country stuck with 1950s-style coal-fired plants that continue to contribute to acid rain and global warming, he said.

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